

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

14 SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to consult with stakeholders on the draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) from the 27 September 2021 for a period of twelve weeks. The outcome of the consultation will be reported back to Cabinet following the closure of the consultation.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 - **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 - **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Section 84 of *The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013* ("the 2013 Act") requires a local authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan ("the Plan") and outlines that a plan must contain:
- a. A local authority's proposals on how it will carry out its education functions to:
 - i. Improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh ("Welsh-medium education") in its area;
 - ii. Improve the standards of Welsh-medium education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area;

- b. The local authority's targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area and for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area;
 - c. Report on the progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous Plan or previous revised Plan.
- 3.2 Cabinet first approved the Bridgend Local Authority WESP in March 2014 and it was subsequently approved by Welsh Government Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in June 2014. The Plan has been reviewed and updated annually prior to seeking approval from Welsh Government.
- 3.3 Following the rapid review commissioned by Welsh Government the timescales for publication of the WESP documents have been reviewed, as reported in Cabinet report (5 September 2017).
- 3.4 *The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing the Demand (Wales) Regulations 2013*² ("the 2013 Regulations"), were the first regulations made under the section 87 powers. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 ("The 2019 Regulations") replace those regulations and make provision for a local authority to prepare a ten-year Plan, the first to have effect from 1 September 2022, subject to the Welsh Ministers' approval.
- 3.5 The purpose of these regulations is to improve opportunities for local authorities to plan Welsh-medium education provision in order to support the current and future expectation for growth in Welsh-medium education. Improving the planning of Welsh medium education will also support Welsh Government's long-term national ambition for the Welsh language as set out in Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh speakers* strategy, your strategy for promoting the Welsh language in accordance with the Promotion Standards under the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015⁵ and also the introduction of a new curriculum for Wales.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Welsh Government issued new guidance for WESP, in August 2016. There is a clear intent to link the work of the WESPs to the Welsh Language Standards and to drive local authorities towards Welsh Government's stated aim of having one million Welsh speakers by 2050. This template is the framework for the ten year WESP plan. The template is a more concise document with very clear aims and objectives to meet each of the seven outcomes illustrated below:
- **Outcome 1:** More nursery children/ three year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh.
 - **Outcome 2:** More reception class children/ five year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh.
 - **Outcome 3:** More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another.

- **Outcome 4:** More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh.
- **Outcome 5:** More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.
- **Outcome 6:** An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
- **Outcome 7:** Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

4.2 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales Regulations 2019) were amended. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) came into force on 1 December, 2020 and make changes to the start date of the next WESP cycle being moved from 1 September 2021 to a year later (to September 2022). The plan has to be submitted to Welsh Government for approval by the 31st January 2022.

4.3 The first ten-year Plan will commence on 1 September 2022 and expire on 31 August 2032. Each further Plan will commence on 1 September in the year during which the previous ten year Plan will come to an end (ie 1 September 2032 to 31 August 2042). The Plan must include a target outlining the expected increase in the number of Year 1 learners taught through the medium of Welsh in the local authority area during the lifespan of the Plan.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The WESP is designed to deliver the key principles of equality, choice and opportunity for all. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been undertaken on the draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which indicates that a full EIA will be required over the next 12 months which will provide monitoring data on which to base further decisions regarding the detail of the WESP.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The report contributes to the following goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsive Wales

7.2 The five ways of working have been considered in the preparation of this report and are summarised below:

Long term	Supports the statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places and support the Welsh language.
Prevention	The Council has a statutory duty to promote the Welsh language. The plan will ensure that children and young people will be able to follow a Welsh-medium education.
Integration	The plan supports the promotion of Welsh education in the communities in which the children and young people live.
Collaboration	The local authority will continue to work in collaboration to ensure that it achieves its vision as set out in the draft WESP plan.
Involvement	Key stakeholders have been involved in drafting the WESP ten-year plan. Further engagement will occur with the consultation.

8. Financial implications

8.1 Local authorities are expected to work with their regional consortia to demonstrate how the Education Improvement Grant administered by Central South Consortium will support the implementation of the WESP.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- note the content of the draft plan; and
- give approval to consult.

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Background documents

None

Attachments

Appendix 1 Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032